(a) whether Government is aware that Afghan President has blamed Pakistan's ISI behind the July 07, 2008 suicide attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul;

(b) whether this issue, *inter-alia*, figured in the meeting between the Prime Minister of India and Pakistan on the sideline of the Fifteenth SAARC Summit held at Colombo in August, 2008; and

(c) if so, the reaction of Prime Minister of Pakistan to the alleged attack on the Indian Embassy and outcome of the enquiry held by him?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) Yes.

(c) In response, the Prime Minister of Pakistan said that he would conduct an independent investigation and would discuss with President Karzai the attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul.

Facilities to Haj Pilgrims

691. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps taken by Government for augmenting the facilities provided to Haj Pilgrims during the last two years; and

(b) the details of grants and services provided to Haj Pilgrims in the country, for the said period, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) The Government of India make elaborate arrangements for the welfare of Haj Pilgrims and strives to improve the facilities provided to them every year. It makes arrangements to facilitate the transportation of the Haj Pilgrims going to Saudi Arabia through the Haj Committee of India and facilitates provision of accommodation and other logistical support for them. For efficient management and supervision of Haj arrangements, a large contingent of seasonal local staff, supervisors, data entry operators, drivers and messengers is appointed by Consulate General of India, Jeddah during Haj period. Every year, a contingent of more than 600 personnel comprising 3 Coordinators, about 135 doctors (including specialists with post-graduate degrees), 140 nurses and other para-medical staff, 46 Assistant Haj Officers, 170 Haj Assistants and about 200 *Khadimul Hujjaj* are sent from India on short-term deputation to Saudi Arabia. Extensive medical orientation is provided to the pilgrims in the community centres set up in Makkah and Madinah by the Consulate General of India, Jeddah. During Haj 2007, 60-bedded admission facility was upgraded to 75-bedded admission facility in Makkah and 15-bedded in Madinah. Besides that, 12 branch offices-cum-dispensaries in Makkah and 6 in Madina were set up for Haj pilgrims. Three medical teams at Jeddah Airport were available to provide round the clock medical assistance to Haj Pilgrims. Medicines provided at these dispensaries and hospital are being supplied from India and procured locally. Seventeen ambulances were pressed into service last year. Of these seven ambulances were sanctioned in 2006 and eight additional ambulances were provided in 2007 which added substantially to the medical facilities for the pilgrims. A system of First Information Report is followed in the case of all the pilgrims who are 70+ years of age in order to ensure that the concerned pilgrims receive specialised medical care. The Government also make arrangements in India for polio, meningitis and

influenza vaccinations for the pilgrims. The Haj Committee of India in coordination with the State Haj Committees provides to the pilgrims information regarding confirmation of their seats, travel documents, transportation, accommodation, release of foreign exchange, embarkation points and departure dates etc. For direct Haj flights from India, Varanasi was added as Sixteenth embarkation point in 2007 and Indore has been added as Seventeenth embarkation point for 2008. The Government have taken a number of decisions to streamline the functioning of Private Tour Operators so that they provide proper services and facilities for the pilgrims. The Government provide' adequate funds every year for these requirements. The expenditure incurred by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in connection with Haj arrangements and subsidy provided for air transportation for Haj pilgrimage during the last two years is as follows:

Financial Year	Expenditure incurred by MEA	Year	Subsidy (Provisional)
2006-07	Rs.23,35,42,728	Haj 2006-II	Rs. 367 crores
2007-08	Rs.22,82,64,018	Haj 2007	Rs. 387 crores

Grant to Afghanistan

692. SARDAR TARLOCHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the amount of grant that has been given to Afghanistan in last three years;

(b) whether any historic religious place of Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists have also been given grant for repairs; and

(c) the steps Government takes for the welfare of the Hindus and Sikhs who are left in Afghanistan?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Government of India have spent Rs.1178.39 crores during the last three years as aid to Afghanistan.

(b) No grant has been provided for repair of religious places in Afghanistan.

(c) The Embassy and the Indian Consulates in Afghanistan take all appropriate measures in this regard and remain in regular touch with local community leaders.

Fishermen in jails of Pakistan

693. SHRI VIJAY KUMAR RUPANI:
SHRI NATUJI HALAJI THAKOR:
SHRI KANJIBHAI PATEL:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 3293 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 24th April, 2008 and state:

(a) whether recently Pakistan authorities have released some of the fishermen;

(b) if so, the number of fishermen released, so far;

(c) if so, the number of fishermen belonging to Gujarat released;

(d) the number of fishermen still lodged in Pakistan jails; and